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Russia proper. It started at the beginning of the nineteenth century when the population of entire villages left their homes after an unsuccessful revolt against the German Baltic barons. In the second half, and particularly in the last few years of the nineteenth century, a new wave of Latvian and Estonian peasant immigrants came to Russia proper, but in the twentieth century the Baltic immigration changed its character. The 1905 Revolution was particularly violent in Latvia and many revolutionary Latvian workers fled to Russia to escape the vengeance of the German landowners. In the years 1919–21, after the collapse of the first Soviet Latvia, about 60,000 to 70,000 Latvian communists and their sympathizers settled down in Soviet Russia. In the same period a number of Latvian and Estonian agricultural colonists left their Russian homes and went to the newly established Baltic 'bourgeois Republics', but the bulk of the colonists remained in Russia, even under the Soviet régime.

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The two main centres of Estonian and Latvian immigration in Russia were the Western border areas near the Estonian and Latvian state frontiers and Western Siberia. More than half of all the Estonians of the U.S.S.R. – 75,000 to be exact – lived in the Western part of that administrative area which originally formed the Leningrad Province, but which later was subdivided into the Provinces of Leningrad and Pskov. Many of the Estonians of the Leningrad Province who were organized into 123 collective farms and had 90 national schools at their disposal had settled down in the nearest vicinity of 'bourgeois Estonia'. Some inhabited villages on the left bank of Lake Peipus which separates Estonia from the U.S.S.R.[23] One of the Soviet border territories comprising an Estonian minority was given the name of the Estonian communist leader, Victor Kingisepp (1888–1922), who was executed by the Estonian 'counter-revolution'. The Kingisepp District was, however, no autonomous Estonian area.

The much smaller community of Latvian peasant colonists of the Leningrad Province had twenty-six National Collective Farms and twenty-one national schools.[24] The real strength of the Latvian ethnical group in the Soviet Union lay in the existence of strong and well-organized colonies in numerous Soviet cities such as Leningrad, Moscow, Kharkov, Dniepropetrovsk, Vitebsk and Smolensk. A 'Foreign Bureau of the Latvian Communist Party' co-ordinated the activities of these colonies and a cultural organization, 'Prometei', catered for their intellectual welfare. 'Prometei' was in charge of three Latvian theatres in Moscow, Smolensk and Leningrad. It had a publishing house of its own which printed communist propaganda literature as well as Latvian translations of Soviet authors and Russian classics.[25] The Soviet Latvians also had two daily newspapers, one published in Leningrad, the other in Novosibirsk and there existed special Latvian children's magazines, Komsomol publications and a Latvian literary and art review.[26]

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